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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>1742 Church Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Dupont Circle Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>May 3, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-280</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Jonathan Mellon</b>		New Construction
			Demolition

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Stoiber & Associates Architects, representing the Keegan Theatre Group, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a two-story addition on the side and alterations to a contributing building in the Dupont Circle Historic District.



**Property History and Description**

1742 Church Street was constructed in 1905 by builder J.A. Dowrick, for use as a gymnasium for the Holton Arms School. The 36' wide by 80' deep building was designed in the Georgian style with a front elevation consisting on the first floor of a raised arched entry, twelve-over-twelve windows with limestone sills and keystones, and brick quoining. The second floor includes a central arched window flanked by elliptical windows, topped by a front gabled cornice. The design wraps around to the side (east) elevation, which has similar fenestration and fronts onto an open gravel parking lot.

**Proposal**

The proposal calls for construction of a two-story addition on the east side of the building, which would be located at the front of the gravel parking lot where there is presently a

basement stair. The addition would be part of a reworking of the interior spaces to provide ADA accessibility as well as to improve the functionality of the theater and lobby.

The addition is proposed to be setback 3'-7" from the primary façade, and to contain a small vestibule with elevator and stairs to the basement, lobby, and mezzanine levels. Measuring 8'-9" in width by 14'-9" in depth, and rising to a height of 26'-8", the addition would consist of a steel structure with large plate glass windows with alternating projecting undulating colored/opaque glass panels. The entrance is proposed to be on the angled east side elevation, and would be accessed through a small courtyard separated from the rear parking area by a wall and plantings. A full glass door with masonry surround is proposed, as well as an undulating metal band for signage. The addition would be topped by a flat roof and elevator overrun clad in brick to tie in with the existing brick parapet wall.

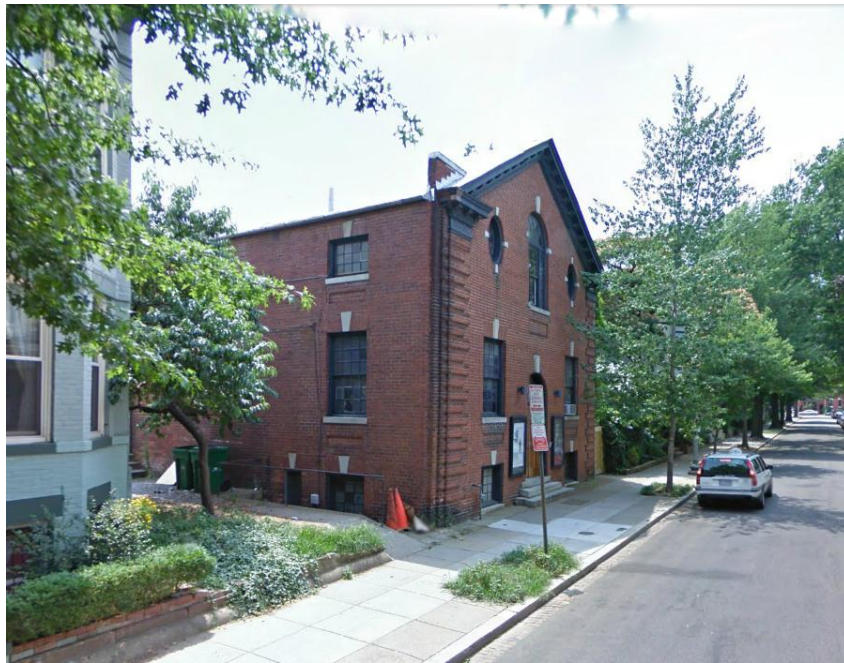
The proposal also calls for cleaning and repointing of the façade brick, and restoration of the windows. Although the main entrance doors would no longer be used, they would remain in-place. A patio/loading/dumpster area is proposed at the rear facing the alley on what it is presently the site of a raised garden. Six tandem parking spaces for the staff would be located on the site of the present gravel parking lot with access from the alley.

### **Evaluation and Recommendation**

While the proposed addition would be subordinate to the existing building, consistent in size with other additions approved by the Board, and clearly differentiated due to its contemporary design, several aspects of the proposal would benefit from further study.

As proposed, the existing main entrance would no longer be functional; as such, the historic relationship of the building to the street would be altered. While mindful of the need to provide for ADA accessibility and improved functionality, the question of what should be done with the historic main entrance is an open one. While leaving the entrance unaltered (as is proposed) is an acceptable choice, repurposing this opening should be considered as an opportunity to activate the space and help it engage with the street. A possible option would be to replace the doors with a window that would allow for a visual connection between the exterior and interior spaces, or alternatively to use the space for the location of the light boxes that presently flank the doors which would serve to advertise theatre productions.

Also worthy of further study is the addition's setback and size. While the impact of the addition on the side (east) elevation is somewhat mitigated by being set back from the primary façade, it would largely obscure the articulated side (east) elevation and result in the loss of historic fabric, most notably the window. Part of the building's prominence on the street is that it projects to the edge of the public sidewalk, approximately eight feet further than the rowhouses on the block. The addition's setback is not sufficient in retaining that prominence. A larger setback, aligned with or behind the front façade of the adjacent rowhouse, would result in the addition being more subordinate to its historic neighbor while at the same time serving to preserve the view of the side (east) elevation of the theatre.



As designed, the single entrance door and stair landing are extremely small for a public assembly building. While mindful of the applicants desire to avoid a BZA hearing (the proposed +/- 150SF addition is all that can be accommodated under the current zoning), the applicants should consider expanding the addition's size to allow for greater ease of entry and exit. As the new primary entrance, the new door should also be prominent and clearly legible from the street.

The design of the addition could be simplified by removing the proposed undulating colored/opaque glass panels while leaving in place the panel for the signage. Having a more transparent addition would allow it serve as a transitional space between the exterior and historic building; this could also be furthered by preserving as much of the side (east) elevation as possible – the cut outs for the new stairs and elevator should be kept to a minimum.

The proposed scope of restoration work to the front elevation will retain character-defining features while at the same time restoring the masonry and windows. The proposed alterations to the rear of the site and parking area will bring a sense of order and functionality to what is presently a largely undefined and visually unappealing space.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the general concept for a side addition to be compatible with the character of the historic district, but to encourage the applicants to restudy the treatment of the building's existing front door and the design, size and setback of the addition.